

FISH & WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: July 10, 2014

Agenda Item: Adams Creek Access Project

Division: Wildlife

Action Needed: Endorsement to Proceed

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 10 minutes

Background

Adams Creek Access Project would acquire a year-round perpetual access easement from Thorson Ranch LLC (Barbara & Ray Russell) for approximately 1.25 miles of road across private land that will connect to U.S. Forest Service Roads #6413 and #6412. USFS Road #6413 (Jumping Creek Rd) crosses the Thorson Ranch property along the lower end of the Adams Creek drainage just north of U.S. Hwy 89 and then splits into the #6412 (Moose Mountain Road) and #6413. This access easement would maintain public access to the aforementioned USFS roads as significant access points to the Little Belt Mountains, Lewis & Clark National Forest, in Meagher County.

This easement has recently been appraised by a private contractor. Estimated market appraisal value is \$140,000. Due to federal government rules and regulations, however, the USFS would be unable to make a monetary offer for the easement in excess of the appraised value that its process produces, which is likely to be much less. As a result, USFS is asking partners such as FWP and the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, and others to help secure the access easement.

Public Involvement Process & Results

Since this is a new proposal before the Commission, no public comment or involvement has been solicited. Public involvement through a draft environmental assessment will be sought, pending an endorsement to proceed.

Alternatives and Analysis

Proposed Action: With other partners, purchase and then transfer to the USFS a perpetual road access easement to the Lewis & Clark National Forest. This project was initiated by the Lewis & Clark National Forest.

No Action: FWP would forgo the opportunity to partner with other capable entities and agencies, leaving permanent status of access to the forest in question.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

FWP recommends the Commission provide an endorsement to proceed with negotiation and acquisition of this access easement. This project will secure permanent public access to USFS lands in the Little Belt Mountains of the Lewis & Clark National Forest.

Proposed Motion

I move the Fish & Wildlife Commission endorse the recommendation to begin negotiations for acquisition of a public road right of way on Adams Creek to access the Lewis & Clark National Forest.